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Also this year two large colonies were observed on the South Coast of New South Wales during winter. Both these colonies contained adults and juveniles of both sexes. The first of these colonies (drawn to my attention by C. Tidemann) was in residence at Cockwhry Creek (Lat. 35°31'30"S, Long. 150°18'E) from April to late June 1985. From local reports this colony has been at this site at approximately this time for most of the last 40 years at least.

I found a second colony at Yatteyatta (Lat. 35°15'20"S, Long. 150°25'E) in a small subtropical rainforested valley surrounded by cleared farmland. The colony had arrived there sometime in late June and stayed until early September. I attempted to count the bats as they flew out of the valley on the nights of 12 and 13 July 1985 and came to the conservative estimate of 100,000 animals.

Considering the departure time from Cockwhry Creek and the arrival time at Yatteyatta it is very tempting to speculate that these two colonies are one and the same.

The large numbers at the Yatteyatta camp further suggest that it is composed of a number of summer colonies which coalesce into this very large winter colony, which itself may move around in a manner determined by the availability of food in any particular year within the South Coast region. Of course in the 'average' year these movements would have a pattern as traditional sites are occupied and deserted in time with the blossoming of certain key species of trees, such as the winter flowering Spotted Gum, *E. maculata*, which blossomed so profusely on the South Coast this year.

Having, in this report, established the presence of large winter colonies of *Pteropus poliocephalus* south of Sydney, studies of the movements of individuals and the composition of colonies are needed. Banding and radio-tracking projects are planned and the **Bat Watch** programme of the Royal Zoological Society is underway.

### REFERENCES

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## Recollections of Australian Naturalists – Part 1

# Wedge-tailed Eagle — Monarch of High Places

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It is sad to see what we are doing to our wildlife and our wilderness. Man and his greed is ruining our world, and though I disagree with some of the actions taken by our conservationists and their followers, they do have a valid concern behind their reasoning. I in my own small way contributed to the final protection of the Eagle Hawk, or the Wedge-tailed Eagle *Aquila audax*. In the years 1957-1974 I was responsible for working on the problems of low lambing levels in South-west and Western Queensland, and the neo-natal mortalities in lambs. It is a long story, and I became involved personally, politically and by research, into the awful slaughter of the Wedge-tailed Eagle at lambing time. In 1963 after 3 000 of these eagles had been shot or trapped on five Merino Studs in my region, I wrote a paper, and said that from my findings, I could see no evidence that the eagle caused all the low lambings in my district. Boy did that set the cat amongst the pigeons, and I was told to **shut up**.

However, I continued my lambing research work, and at the same time quietly jotted down evidence I collected, camera slides and data, for the next ten years. I climbed trees and studied eagle-nests year by year. I tagged young birds, to give me some indication of their movement, and some were trapped a year later as far as 200 miles away. I watched what they ate, and studied the bones of fresh and old material in unoccupied, and occupied nests. (The last named caused me some real concern, and bloody awful fear miles away from help. Idiot I be?).

In 1969, I went to a Refresher School in Canberra. CSIRO Wildlife was there with their big guns. It is a strange thing in life, but scientists keep things to themselves.



Photo: H. Millen

During the course, involving low lambings, predation etc., one of these Canberra bound odd-bods gave a paper on the incidence of Wedge-tailed Eagle observed on a sheep farm near Albury from 1965 to 1968. The 2 000 acre property certainly gave them some real good data, but when non-scientist, layman, 'coolibah college' trained 'University of Hard Knocks' Billy from the bush of the Hick State of Queensland, showed them his data, collected from 56 properties in an area twice the size of the United Kingdom, it sort of brought them to their feet, away off their little ivory towers.

Then as now, the poem by Tennyson really does things to me, inside.

*Aquila audax: Wedge-tailed Eagle*

"He clasps the crag with crooked hands;  
"Close to the sun in lonely lands  
"Ring'd with the azure world he stands"

Looking back to those years of 1958-1970, when I was active in my middle age, I oft think how I clasped the crag with my crooked hands, climbing those craggy Grey Ranges, Chesterton Ranges, Warrego Ranges, to study an eagle's nest, those lonely lands, and, at the top I would stand like the eagle and survey God's country as it should be.

In 1974 the Division of Land Utilisation Queensland sent me a book or report *Qld Western Arid Region Land*

*Use Study.* Many organisations in our State Government and Australian Government contributed work towards its findings, that embraced some 65 million hectares of pastoral land. On page 3 **Acknowledgements:** I was thrilled to see written in the 1st Para:

"Special mention should be made of R. J. (Bob) Anson of the Queensland Sheep and Wool Branch who helped the team in their early understanding of the area, and also for the contributed comments and papers he submitted for the final report".

In that report was my story of the eagle; and my final comment:

"The continued persecution of a native predator, that eats mostly rabbits, and has scarcely any adverse effect on the reproduction factor and consequent low reproduction rate in Queensland's Merino sheep flocks in our semi-arid zone is hardly justified. The Wedge-tailed Eagle must be proclaimed protected under the Fauna Protection Act".

In Queensland now the bird is given full protection. I should have joined the Queensland Wildlife Department, unfortunately one needs a degree and/or the ability to grow a long beard and look like Harry Butler. *I must buy him a new hat!* R. J. A.